

CHEYNEY UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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CHEYNEY, PA – (March 24, 2009) – The Keystone Honors Academy at Cheyney University, will host world-renowned poet, writer, commentator, activist, and educator Nikki Giovanni on April 9, at 7 p.m., at the Dudley Theatre.

Ms. Giovanni is arguably one of the most read American poets who continue to be a prominent voice in social activism, particularly civil rights and equality. With over 30 years and 30 books under her literary belt, Ms. Giovanni is a positive and inspirational figure who prides herself on her heritage and sense of personal responsibility.

Dr. Tara Kent, Dean of the Keystone Honors Academy said, “The Keystone Honors Academy is proud to host this prolific poet and educator on the Cheyney University campus. Through her art and social activism, Nikki Giovanni conveys a message that will further enrich the educational experience of our entire campus community. This event is an exemplar of what honors education represents and achieves.”

Born in Knoxville, Tennessee, she grew up in Lincoln Heights, an all-black suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio. She graduated with honors from Fisk University, her grandfather's alma mater, in 1968; after graduating from Fisk, she attended the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University.

Ms. Giovanni's spoken word recordings have achieved widespread recognition and honors. Her album *Truth Is On Its Way*, on which she reads her poetry against a background of gospel music, was a top 100 album and received the Best Spoken Word Album given by the National

Association of Radio and Television Announcers. And her Nikki Giovanni Poetry Collection, on which she reads and talks about her poetry, was one of five finalists for a Grammy Award.

Her autobiography, *Gemini*, was a finalist for the National Book Award; *Love Poems*, *Blues: For All the Changes*, and *Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea* were all honored with NAACP Image Awards. *Blues: For All the Changes* reached #4 on the Los Angeles Times Bestseller list, a rare achievement for a book of poems. Most recently, her children's picture book *Rosa*, about the civil rights legend Rosa Parks, became a Caldecott Honors Book, and Bryan Collier, the illustrator, was given the Coretta Scott King award for best illustration. *Rosa* also reached #3 on The New York Times Bestseller list.

Cheyney University of Pennsylvania is a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). Now celebrating its 25th year, PASSHE comprises Pennsylvania's 14 public universities, with a combined enrollment of more than 112,500, making it the largest provider of higher education in the Commonwealth. The 14 PASSHE universities offer degree and certificate programs in more than 120 areas of study. Approximately 405,000 PASSHE alumni live and work in Pennsylvania.

The 14 PASSHE universities are Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.

Cheyney University is the nation's oldest historically Black institution of higher education. It is also the only Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. At its inception, the school successfully provided free classical education for qualified young people, and today the university offers baccalaureate degrees in more than 30 disciplines and six master's degree programs. For more information, please visit the website at <http://www.cheyney.edu>.